



THE FACULTY OF PHILOSOPHY
WIDYA MANDALA SURABAYA
CATHOLIC UNIVERSITY,
SURABAYA, INDONESIA



VOLUME 1, 2022

PROCEEDINGS OF THE INTERNATIONAL SYMPOSIUM ON TRANSFORMATIVE IDEAS IN A CHANGING WORLD

THE GLOBAL SOLIDARITY CRISIS


EDITOR: AGUSTINUS RYADI



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Editor :

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Layout :

- REVKA PRIMA MEDIA

Diterbitkan Oleh :



The Faculty of Philosophy
Widya Mandala Surabaya Catholic University,
Surabaya, Indonesia
Jl. Raya Kalisari Selatan no.1, Pakuwon City-Surabaya

Cetakan ke -1

Tahun 2022

ISSN :

Dicetak oleh REVKA PRIMA MEDIA

Sanksi Pelanggaran Hak Cipta (Undang-Undang No. 28 Tahun 2014 tentang Hak Cipta)

Setiap orang yang dengan tanpa hak melakukan pelanggaran hak ekonomi, tanpa hak dan/atau tanpa izin Pencipta atau pemegang Hak Cipta untuk penggunaan secara komersial dipidana pidana penjara dan/atau pidana denda berdasarkan ketentuan Pasal 113 Undang-Undang No. 28 Tahun 2014 tentang Hak Cipta.

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Ethical Consumers: Does Deontological Evaluation Play a Role in Purchasing Organic Food Products?

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Ethical consumers tend to associate their behaviors with sustainable and green consumerism. They will only purchase ethical products, from ethical producers that respect human beings and the environment including animals. Organic food products have long been known as ethical products because the process of growing them will always protect human beings and the environment. This study involved 174 respondents, and evaluated the determinant variables of organic food purchasing intention, which are attitude toward organic food and subjective norms. Subjective norms indicate the belief or norm that important people will approve of a particular behavior which is purchasing organic food. The study found that those two determinant variables significantly contribute to the intention to purchase organic food. Furthermore, this study also tested whether deontological evaluation as an ethical value would also give impact those two determinant variables. In this study, deontology is the normative ethical view that judges the morality of purchasing organic food based on compliance with the rules. The study reported that deontological evaluation significantly influenced the consumers' attitude toward organic food and also subjective norms of buying organic food. Therefore, to increase the consumers' intention to purchase organic food, the stakeholders need to educate the consumers about the ethical values of purchasing organic food.

Keywords: deontology, organic food, attitude, subjective norms

Introduction

Producing organic food is helping the world to be better because it will be harmless to the environment. Using the bad chemistry to grow the vegetables and fruits will have effect in two different ways. First, it will help the vegetables and fruits grow faster, providing more foods and cheaper foods to the people. That could be considered a good effort to feed more people. From the business point of view, producing more foods enables the farmers and the channel distribution members to earn more money faster. That also gives significant benefit to the business side. Second, it will destroy nature, due to the harmful chemicals, especially in using chemical fertilizer that will damage the soil. In the future, it will affect people's wealth and health.

Considering those effects, the decision-makers or the regulators need to educate people to switch their vegetable and fruit consumption to organic products. The more people purchase and consume organic food products, the more contribution we give to mother nature and also to the human being. This study is very imperative to conduct because the study will find out the determinant factors that build the organic food purchasing. Understanding the determinant factors that trigger the consumers to purchase organic foods will help the regulators to design a communication strategy to educate people. The previous studies indicate that deontological

evaluation will shape the particular intention to behave. However, attitude toward that particular behavior and also subjective norms will help to build the intention to behave.

Therefore, this study will evaluate the contribution of attitude and subjective norms to the effect of deontological evaluation on the intention to purchase organic foods. The finding of this study will not only help the regulators to design the communication strategy but also help the farmer and the distribution channel member of organic food to sell more products and to earn more profit. And at the same time, it will help to improve the quality of human life and the environment.

The Effect of Deontological Values on Attitude and Subjective Norms

Attitude and Subjective Norm are recognized as part of the The Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) model, designed by Ajzen (1987). Some studies (Alam and Sayuti, 2011; Yadav and Patak, 2017; Ali, et al., 2020; Suleman at al., 2021) have implemented the concept of TPB to the food purchasing behaviors. This study, will use TPB concept and evaluate the contribution of deontological evaluation on attitude and subjective norms in organic food buying. Subjective norms refer to the perceived social pressure to perform a particular behavior, which is purchasing organic food behavior. The attitude will represent the particular attitude toward purchasing organic food.

According to Hunt and Vitell (1986), the deontological evaluation process involves the decision-maker comparing the behaviors implied in the decision situation. However, deontological evaluation can be perceived as the morality of an action that should be based on whether that action itself is right or wrong, rather than based on the consequences of the action. Although there is such thing as common-sense, the deontological evaluation will be perceived differently and tend to be subjective.

Some previous studies reported the contribution of deontological evaluation to consumers' decision-making process. One of the decision-making processes is behavioral intention. However, the contribution of deontological evaluation on behavioral intention is not direct. Some studies use the TPB models to test the role of deontological evaluation in developing behavioral intention. The most common variables of the TPB used to test are attitude and subjective norms. The previous studies reported that those two variables were affected by deontological evaluation significantly.

Therefore, the hypotheses for this study regarding the role of deontological evaluation on attitude and subjective norms, are:

H1: The deontological evaluation affects positively and significantly the attitude toward purchasing organic food

H2: The deontological evaluation affects positively and significantly the subjective norms

The Effect of Attitude and Subjective Norms on Behavioral Intention

Based on the TPB model, the behavioral intention will be shaped by some variables such as attitude, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control. In this study, two of three determinant factors were studied, namely attitude and subjective norms. The TPB model is stable enough because it has been tested with different research objects and different research contexts.

This study tested the contribution of attitudes toward purchasing organic food products and the subjective norms. Therefore, the hypothesis of this study is:

H3: The attitude toward purchasing organic foods and the subjective norms will affect the intention to purchase organic foods

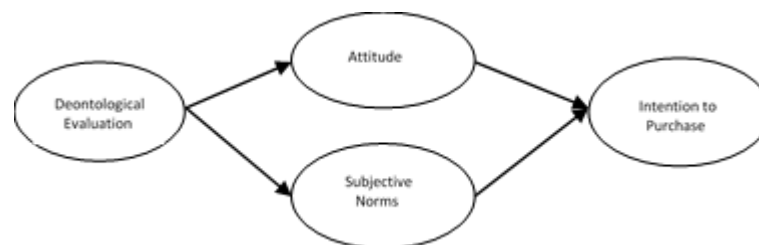


Figure 1. Research Model

Research Method

This research is a quantitative research that collects the database on a survey approach. The sampling method is purposive sampling, with the criteria of people that have experience in buying and consuming organic foods. After data cleaning, the data from 174 respondents were analyzed using SPSS software. Simple linear regression and also multiple regression was used to analyze and test the hypotheses.

The questionnaire consisted of 4 variables, which are deontological evaluation, attitude, subjective norms, and intention to purchase organic foods. The indicator of subjective norms, attitudes, and intention to purchase organic foods was adapted from the study conducted by Tarkiainen and Sundqvist (2005). Meanwhile, the indicators of deontological evaluation were adapted from the study conducted by Chan, Wong, and Leung (2008).

Data Analysis

First data analysis to test hypothesis 1, which is the effect of deontological evaluation on the attitude toward organic foods. The regression analysis indicates that hypothesis 1 is accepted. That means the deontological evaluation significantly affects the consumers' attitude toward organic foods. The P-Value 0.000 implies a significant effect. Furthermore, the value of beta positive shows that the relations of those two variables are going in the same direction. The

higher the consumers' deontological evaluation will build better consumers' attitudes toward organic foods. Table 1 shows the outcome of this analysis.

Table 1

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	1.792	.453		3.960	.000
	Deontology	.524	.101	.366	5.162	.000
a.	Dependent Variable: Attitude					

The second analysis was conducted to test hypothesis 2, which is the effect of deontological evaluation on the subjective norms. Table 2 shows the result that indicates the significant effect of deontological evaluation on subjective norms. The P-Value of 0.000 proves the effect. Meanwhile, the positive beta indicates that the relation between these two variables is going in the same direction. The higher the consumers' evaluation of deontology will affect the higher subjective norms.

Table 2

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	.252	.705		.357	.721
	Deontology	.793	.158	.357	5.020	.000
a.	Dependent Variable: Subjective Norm					

The last analysis was done to test hypothesis 3, which is the effect of attitude and subjective norms on the consumers' intention to purchase organic food. Multiple regression was used to test, and the result shows those two variables significantly trigger the intention toward purchasing organic food. The P-Value of 0.000 supports the effects. The value of adjusted R-Square 0.572 indicates that 57.2% of intentions toward purchasing organic food were motivated by the variables of attitudes and subjective norms. The rest was triggered by other variables that are not in the study. Although both determinant variables affect the dependent variables, the beta coefficient clearly shows that the subjective norms give a bigger impact to the intention toward purchasing organic foods. Table 3 shows the finding to test hypothesis 3.

Table 3

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	-.692	.322		-2.149	.033
	Attitude	.540	.092	.347	5.896	.000
	SubjectiveNorm	.515	.059	.515	8.735	.000
a.	Dependent Variable: Intention					

Discussion

The findings of this study support the previous study conducted by Chang and Chou (2018). The previous study reported that deontological evaluation positively and significantly affects the attitude toward bringing the shopping bags. At the same time, the study also reported that deontological evaluation positively and significantly affects subjective norms.

Furthermore, Chang and Chous (2018) also found that those two variables positively and significantly contribute to the development of the intention to bring shopping bags. The research conducted by Karmarkar (2015) and Tarkiainen and Sundqvist (2005) also reports a similar finding, which is when the consumers have better deontological evaluation, they tend to have a higher attitude toward particular ethical behavior. The study also supports the finding of the research conducted by Lam and Chen (2006) on a similar behavioral intention, which is bringing shopping bags.

Managerial Implication

Understanding that deontological evaluation contributes to the development of subjective norms and attitudes toward purchasing organic foods will help decision-makers design the strategy to educate the consumer. This study also provides evidence that those two determinant factors will motivate consumers to purchase organic foods. Therefore, educating people to develop their deontological evaluation will increase their intention to purchase organic foods.

Increasing the deontological evaluation will require the consumers to have a better understanding of social values and also personal values. Communicating and educating consumers about social values and personal values will be very important. The decision-makers can use the approach of social marketing to help the consumer understand the values better.

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